

Part 5. The Holy Spirit

Lesson 5: Virtue and Vice – Preparing the Heart to Receive God’s Word

Lesson Summary

Scripture contrasts vice—sinful and fleshly habits that resist God—with virtue, Spirit-formed qualities that reflect Christ. Paul lists vices including immorality, idolatry, envy, and drunkenness (Gal. 5:19–21), while virtues include love, joy, peace, and self-control (Gal. 5:22–23). Peter describes a godly progression of virtue leading to maturity (2 Pet. 1:5–7).

Virtue aligns us with wisdom (Prov. 1:7) and enables discernment (John 7:17), while vice blinds the heart (Rom. 1:21–22) and hinders truth (2 Tim. 3:7). Virtue prepares the heart to rightly receive both *Logos*—the written Word—and *Rhema*—the timely, Spirit-applied Word—while vice resists and misuses Scripture (James 1:21).

Jesus modeled this in the wilderness: Satan twisted the *Logos*, but Christ, full of virtue and Spirit-led, rightly applied the Word (Matt. 4:1–11). True wisdom is inseparable from virtue (James 3:17).

To hear God rightly, we must lay aside sin, cultivate virtue, and approach His Word with humility and obedience.

Key Takeaways

- **Vice = Flesh:** Sinful habits that blind and harden the heart (Gal. 5:19–21; Rom. 1:21–22).
- **Virtue = Spirit:** Godly qualities that prepare the heart for truth (Gal. 5:22–23; 2 Pet. 1:5–7).
- **Wisdom requires virtue:** “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge” (Prov. 1:7).
- **Virtue precedes understanding:** A willing heart gains insight (John 7:17).
- **Vice blocks application:** Always learning but never arriving at truth (2 Tim. 3:7).
- **Jesus’ example:** Overcame temptation by rightly applying Scripture (Matt. 4:1–11).
- **Rightly dividing the Word:** Requires not only sound doctrine but a virtuous heart (2 Tim. 2:15).
- **Wisdom and virtue interwoven:** True wisdom is pure, peaceable, gentle, and full of mercy (James 3:17).

Questions & Answers

1. **Q:** What is the biblical definition of vice?
A: Sinful, flesh-driven habits that oppose God’s nature (Gal. 5:19–21).
2. **Q:** How is virtue described in Scripture?
A: Spirit-formed qualities like love, joy, peace, patience, and self-control (Gal. 5:22–23; 2 Pet. 1:5–7).
3. **Q:** Why does virtue enable discernment?
A: Because a willing, pure heart receives deeper revelation (John 7:17).
4. **Q:** How does vice hinder spiritual growth?
A: It blinds the mind, resists conviction, and misuses truth (Rom. 1:21–22; 2 Tim. 3:7).

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5. **Q:** How did Jesus model virtue in the wilderness?

A: By applying Scripture rightly against Satan's deception (Matt. 4:1–11).

6. **Q:** What does it mean to "rightly divide" the Word?

A: To handle God's Word accurately with both sound doctrine and a virtuous heart (2 Tim. 2:15).

7. **Q:** What is the relationship between wisdom and virtue?

A: Wisdom flows through virtue, not apart from it (James 3:17).

"Vice blinds and hardens, but virtue opens the heart to receive God's Word with clarity, wisdom, and transformation."